



## CONGRESSIONAL HEARING RESUME

106th Congress

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**Date: 14 October 1999**

**SUBJECT:           Hearing on Kosovo Lessons Learned**

**COMMITTEE:       Senate Armed Services Committee**

**CHAIRMAN:        The Honorable John Warner**

**MEMBERS PRESENT (bold face):**

### **REPUBLICANS**

**Strom Thurmond, (R-SC)**

John McCain, (R-AZ)

Bob Smith, (R-NH)

**James Inhofe, (R-OK)**

Rick Santorum, (R-PA)

Olympia Snowe, (R-ME)

Pat Roberts (R-KS)

Wayne Allard, (R-CO)

**Tim Hutchinson, (R-AR)**

**Jeff Sessions, (R-AL)**

### **DEMOCRATS**

**Carl Levin, (D-MI)**

**Edward Kennedy, (D-MA)**

Jeff Bingaman, (D-NM)

Robert Byrd, (D-WV)

**Charles Robb, (D-VA)**

Joseph Lieberman, (D-CT)

**Max Cleland, (D-GA)**

Mary Landrieu, (D-LA)

Jack Reed, (D-RI)

**WITNESSES:**       William Cohen, Secretary of Defense  
                          General Henry Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Information contained in this resume was obtained during an open hearing. It will not be released outside of the Department of Defense (DoD) agencies until published hearing transcripts have been released by the Committee, and only to the extent it is in accord with published hearing procedures.

**Prepared by: Maj Tom Henwood      Date: 14 October 1999      Ext: 697-6790**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**The Committee convened this hearing to learn the preliminary results of the Department of Defense (DoD) study of lessons learned from the air campaign in Kosovo. Committee members universally praised the US forces that participated in Operation Allied Force (OAF). Several senators and Sec Cohen and Gen Shelton stated the importance of understanding what we could have done better, without losing sight of the successes of OAF. Key points made during the hearing were expectation of zero-casualty combat operations is unrealistic; target approval process should be addressed; increased interoperability with our allies is a must; ISR assets and precision munitions are critical; weather significantly impeded the air campaign in the beginning; C-17 and B-2 performed brilliantly; and we must have more mobile, flexible, sustainable forces in the future.**

The hearing opened at 0930.

## **OPENING REMARKS**

### **Sen Warner**

- Started by paying tribute to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families for the outstanding job they did and sacrifices they made during the air campaign
- Experience in Kosovo is a guide for the future. Need to address some issues:
  - Unrealistic expectation of zero casualties in combat operations
  - Whether or not we can prevail in future conflicts using only air assets
  - At what point does the need for alliance cohesion outweigh requirement for military effectiveness
  - One of the goals stated by POTUS was to protect thousands of Kosovar Albanians. Not sure if we achieved that goal

### **Sen Levin**

- OAF was an extraordinary success because an alliance of 19 nations was steadfast and for the first time ethnic cleansing was turned back
- Need to analyze what went wrong and what we can do better. Need to understand what went right as well
- Alliance cohesion ruled out the use of ground forces--was there a better way to handle this and send a message to Milosevic earlier in the campaign that we would do whatever was necessary to defeat him

### **Sen Inhofe**

- Stated he was opposed to our intervention in Kosovo
- Still many things we can learn from OAF. Asked witnesses to respond for the record to how well certain things worked: C-17s (asked about the future of the program), B-2 and its avionics upgrade, use of U-2 and the future impact of Global Hawk program
- Also asked about troop protection at Tirana and impact of OAF on logistics and airlift capability

### **Sen Thurmond**

- Asked what is the future of Kosovo. Results of past nation building efforts have been questionable at best

- Also asked why and to what ends are our troops deployed in Kosovo

### **Sen Sessions**

- Extraordinarily proud of U.S. forces
- OAF is not a great victory. Voiced his wish that peacekeeping efforts had been more successful to prevent our military involvement

## **WITNESS STATEMENTS**

### **Secretary Cohen**

- Told committee this was the department's quick look at Kosovo lessons learned; expect final report early next year
- Addressed misapprehension that having no fatalities is now the goal for DoD
  - Reminded Members of his earlier testimony that we would likely have fatalities during Kosovo operations
  - Our responsibility is to minimize casualties while accomplishing the mission; that there were no combat fatalities is an extraordinary demonstration of the competence, patriotism, and determination of our men and women in uniform
- Talked about whether or not we should have been involved
  - We did have a strategic interest
  - Belgrade created the humanitarian crisis--the air campaign did not. We knew OAF would take some time, there would be significant refugee flows, and the operation would test our relationship with the Russians
- Highlighted some of the successes of OAF
  - Unified approach with steady application of military might by allies
  - NATO command structure worked well
  - NATO proved its ability to conduct sustained combined operations. Notion that US could have successfully acted unilaterally is not true. The alliance was critical for success
- Other key points
  - Idea that political leadership approved all targets is wrong. Entire classes of targets delegated to military commanders for approval. Only certain target sets with high probability of significant casualties were approved by the Atlantic Council
  - If we had faced an MTW during OAF, we could have handled it, albeit at greater risk. To do two MTWs during OAF, we would have withdrawn assets from OAF but could have met the challenge
  - C-17 performed brilliantly
  - Disparity in capabilities of US and allies highlights the need for the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI)
  - We need to have more mobile, flexible, sustainable forces in the future

### **Gen Shelton**

- Skies over Kosovo were as deadly as skies over Iraq
- Weather was our enemy--in beginning of air campaign large number of sorties cancelled due to weather. Between 23 May and 9 Jun, only small percentage of sorties cancelled due to weather and our effectiveness increased accordingly (Sec Cohen added that during the 78-day air campaign, there were only about 24 days of operations unimpeded by weather)

- Zero casualties not our goal but we shouldn't apologize for achieving it
- Need to work on interoperability--DCI is the roadmap and parallels JV2010
- ISR assets provided unprecedented amount of information. We may not have sufficient numbers of these assets
- OAF was the most precise bombing campaign in history
  - We are looking at what's the right mix of weapons and ways to expand the number of systems that can carry PGMs
- OAF demonstrated our improved capability to track supplies from the warehouse to the warfighter

## **KEY COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND ANSWERS**

- Sen Warner asked on what three things should NATO focus. Sec Cohen responded that there should be a greater focus on planning, DCI should be highest priority (need for allies to invest more to increase compatibility/interoperability), and the target approval process should be addressed (need to decide in advance how much latitude military commanders have)
- Sen Warner asked Gen Shelton how hard he pushed to keep use of ground forces an open option. Gen Shelton responded that military commanders didn't want any options taken off the table but it would have been dangerous to threaten Milosevic with use of ground forces without the political consensus to back up the threat. Sen Levin added that there were many Members of Congress who were not willing to endorse use of ground troops
- Sen Levin initiated a discussion of the role of the media in operations like Kosovo. He said restricted access in Serbia for the media was a problem. Sec Cohen added that we were deficient in our information operations. We didn't get our messages out to the Kosovars and Serbians
- Sen Hutchinson echoed Sen Thurmond's opening remarks. He asked how long we would be in Kosovo
- Sen Robb stated he was for holding the military accountable but was against the Congress trying to do the job of military commanders. We shouldn't limit ourselves by taking options off the table (use of ground forces) or setting exit dates for US forces
- Sec Cohen stated we need more Rivet Joints, JSTARS, PGMs, and ISR assets
- Gen Shelton said we used less than 10% of our precision munitions. Some strains, though, particularly in CALCMs.
- Sen Cleland said with F-22 program/F-18 upgrades we're on the right track to preserve air dominance. Air dominance wins wars and saves lives. Precision weapons are how we go to war. Airlift capability is critical. Need C-5 modernization and C-17. We need mobile, flexible, agile forces. Should better define our strategic objectives before we commit forces. Need to address NATO's over-reliance on US capabilities
- Sen Warner stated deployment of Apaches was a snafu. Gen Shelton responded that the decision was well thought out but Apaches were not used because the situation in Kosovo changed--weather improved and the air campaign was having a greater impact. Sec Cohen added that when the weather began improving, we started using UAVs more with the A-10s. Gen Shelton also said the benefits of employing the Apaches never outweighed the risks

**The open portion of the hearing was adjourned at 1215. Committee members and witnesses moved to SR-222 for the closed session.**